dhist art had taken form were, as we have seen, varied. Some, notably those adopted on the northwestern borders of India, were Greek. Others were more fully Indian. Persian art, through the Sassanian Empire, made its influence felt, especially on minor decorations. Buddhist iconography had conventions—among them draperies and symbolic gestures and postures—which were rather inflexible and allowed the craftsman less freedom for the expression of individual genius than have some other artistic traditions. Yet the Chinese sculptor took over these alien forms and at his best greatly improved them. Often he seems to have been a lay artisan who worked from a description rather than a model. Certainly he sometimes took liberties with tradition. He more nearly humanized the revered figures and gave them greater variety. In time, too, he made the mantle folds on the images more flowing and graceful. At its highest, Chinese Buddhist sculpture is of a better quality as an expression of artistic genius and even of religious feeling and conviction than are its Indian prototypes. The characteristic Buddhist statue shows repose, relaxation, meditation, and unperturbed calm. Into it can go much of the idealism and aspiration which Buddhism fosters.

Chinese Buddhist sculptors ventured on innovations. The *stelae,* for example, which they executed either were Chinese *w* origin or had been sinicized in form and design. Memorial *stelae* seem first to have appeared in Han times and were elaborated in subsequent centuries. They bore inscriptions and sometimes figures, and often were mounted on tortoises and crowned with entwined dragons.

Since the greatest of Chinese Buddhist sculpture was executed in the first century of the T'ang and in pre-T'ang times, most of it has probably perished. There remain, however, numerous examples, notably on cliffs and in grottoes. Prominent among these are the ones at Ta-t'ung, in Shansi, once a capital of the Northern Wei, at Tun-huang? in Kansu, and at Lung Men, in Honan. Through extant specimens experts trace various periods. In the sculptures of the Northern Wei the Hellenistic influences which found such marked expression at Gandhara are strong, into a transitional period shortly before the Sui and under the Sui a new wave from India entered, and the early years of the T'ang are characterized by a strength and a richness and exuber-